

# Whispering Magic

by FantasyReadingAddict

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Summary: Hiccup is just trying to get away from the pressures of being chief, when he discovers a magic hidden deep within the forest that he can't explain. When he wakes up in the middle of sea on a rock and Toothless is gone, the only thing left for him to do is board the clan ships that pass by and head to DunBroch, where things only get more a whole lot more complicated.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Hello, to all of you Merricup fans! I hope you like my story, please review if you want. I've already started writing the next chapter, so it should be up in 4-6 days. I try to make the chapters extra long for your enjoyment but they take a little bit longer to post because I want them to be perfect! Anyway have fun and tell me what you think!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>As the ground flashed by in a whirl of all things green, brown and well, rocky, Hiccup soared across Berk, fleeing the deserted wasteland as fast as he possibly could. It wasn't that he wanted to leave his cold and barren home but what he was choosing to leave behind for a period of time would not be something he missed. The responsibilities of being the chief of all Berk were not particularly something Hiccup had a knack at or desire to be no matter how many times his mother told him so. In fact all he really wanted to do was fly Toothless and explore the new worlds all around him unlocked by the power and freedom he felt when riding upon a dragon's back.<p>

Of course, it was enough to make anyone never want to return, and such feelings flooded through Hiccup especially strongly because whatever he might face before him in flight could most certainly not be worse than anything he chose to leave behind on the island. The only thing that he might feel some resentment about leaving would be his friends, but he had to get out and the options were go alone or

don't go at all. Especially after Astrid, the thought of which sent dark shudders through Hiccup in remembrance. He had to take a moment of deep concentration before he finally was able to salvage his mind from the cruel place it was heading to and decided to focus on the horizon beckoning him forth ahead. The icy wind that would leave you breathless if inhaled too sharply beat down upon him almost trying and succeeding to convince him to go home. But as he crouched down lower upon the dragon, the more it let up, and the more determined he was to continue his aimless journey.

The dragon let out a moan, almost as if to ask "where to?" but Hiccup didn't respond. Maybe if he didn't move, he thought, he wouldn't exist and wouldn't have to answer any more questions. Maybe the world would carry on without him. The dragon however did not share the same feelings and continued to pester him with constant noises and jostling so that Hiccup really had no other choice but to give him a point to fly to or be thrown off.

"Justâ€¦| Anywhere but here bud."

Another moan proceeded to gurgle out from beneath the hide of dark scales.

"You're a dragon! You know how to get to places, just go somewhere, anywhere but Berk."

The moaning continued and vibrated the place where Hiccups hands rested comfortably.

"Toothlessâ€¦| "

The dragon looked up at him eyes wide and clear. It was like this they stayed for a moment until the larger of the two decided to look away. Almost with fake sarcasm did he gurgle back noises that sounded too close to actual mocking words to be taken seriously and at this point did Hiccup let out a laugh, a laugh that rang out in the sky and didn't seem to end for eons. It was he realized, the first time he had laughed in over a month, since his father died. So he decided to laugh and laugh and laugh until it felt like he was going to fall over and spew all of his intestines and still be chortling.

It was a feeling that Hiccup realized to be true and utter freedom. While he was flying, he was free. Over the past weeks he had forgotten that. In fact, flying had almost become a chore, a burden of going from to and from to fix this or mend that or solve this problem and make everything better. Toothless was always great and all but it just wasn't the same as being free in the wide-open sky, no responsibilities to weigh them down. So, slowly and steadily did he raise himself up, bad leg first to his full height on the saddle of the dragon.

Toothless lurched forward a little in surprise at the sudden weight change but was otherwise unaffected. This obviously wasn't the first time he'd lost it. It was time to do something so stupid that it could be nothing other than mind-numbingly fun, so he cracked a very crooked smile that looked especially goofy with the mess of brown hair flying every which way in the wind, took one last deep breath and jumped leaving only Toothless to roll his eyes and dive down after him.

As he fell whoops of terror and joy mixed together escaped his swirling form until he found himself entangled in a mass of dark wings as the clouds flew by. After what seemed like hours just enjoying the feeling of falling Hiccup looked down and realized the quickly approaching danger of the ground becoming closer than he would have liked. In his moment of small panic he tried to remount himself only to find his bad leg caught on one of the jumble of leather straps. He heaved, only to see the trees beginning to quickly pass him by. Toothless shrieked in fear, only to be saved at the very last second by the click of metal landing into place and the ground just brushing his very long and dark tail.

Hiccup a little blustered from his fall, which ended up being very much less graceful than he would have liked, dusted himself off and patted his companion on the head.

"We need to work on our landing skills bud."

He said nonchalantly to himself, almost planning ahead to the practice once they found an adequate place to stay. But when the dragon didn't turn back, or roll over to snicker and crush him he knew something was wrong. Toothless had gone into full protector mode, back straight, ears pricked, eyes dilated, he was ready for anything to sweep out of the forest and Hiccup was ready in an instant to assist in the defeat of anything that did. A silence more quiet than Hiccup had ever known quiet to be possible crept over the clearing in the trees almost visually darkening the place. Toothless let out a low grumble of disapproval, it was becoming very still, making it too easy for anything to readily pounce and destroy its prey. But what did come was more unbelievably scary than anything that could have inflicted pain upon the two.

A single orb of blue light appeared, almost out of nowhere and filled the darkness and silence with a beckoning gesture. For a moment Hiccup sat transfixed, just staring at the orb, which was in some ways more beautiful than anything he'd ever seen and in other ways just as frightening. He felt his curiosity begin to nag him, wanting to touch it and figure out just what could be so real and yet so supernatural at the same time. He felt his legs move themselves, his eyes never leaving the thing once and as he slowly made his way off the dragon and over to the orb, he could feel himself beginning to forget everything, why he was there, who he was and what he was doing. All that mattered was that he touch it and do anything that it might command of him.

He was hypnotized completely by the glow of the blue flame and as Toothless watched him make his way over, he sensed something. A new feeling came across him, a feeling that sinks to the bottom of your stomach like a rock and just stays there reminding you of why you're feeling that way but you don't know why. And then almost in an instant the feeling was gone as Hiccup reached out and grazed the creature with his hand. With the strange feeling gone came another to Toothless and he felt himself being pressed in against by imaginary walls, walls that confined him to a single position and immobilized him forever in one place. The dragon thrashed and kicked and sputtered as Hiccup moved to reach out and touch the others that appeared behind the first in a trail.

It was he decided the creatures that were causing this feeling of unbearable pressure and were the reason Hiccup was steadily making

his way over and away from the clearing. So Toothless pushed and ran and grabbed Hiccup from around the legs and dragged him up and outwards to the sky and away from the eerie magic that the forest held.

"Toothless! Toothless! Those things were leading me somewhere, somewhere important. You have to take me back bud, I need to find out what they are!" Yelled Hiccup from his position down low.

When the dragon didn't respond and continued to fly on his path, this time over an ocean just about as far as you could get from the forest, Hiccup tried again and this time started hitting Toothless, trying to beat his point into him that he needed to go back.

"Toothless! Put me down! We can't just leave those things out there and ignore them. We have to go back!"

This time the dragon did show some form of obedience by landing them on a tall rock that jutted out in the sea like a spire climbing up and up until it reached the sky. It was dark now and even though Toothless had night vision and could figure out where they were, Hiccup was as lost and confused as a blind person being kidnapped.

"Toothless!"

Hiccup landed with a thump and smacked his head against the hard and unforgiving stone. The dragon alighted down next to him in a single easy movement.

"What was that for?"

Hiccup looked over at the dragon expectantly as if he had some obvious reason for dragging him into the sky and then throwing him down on a rock. The dragon himself just walked in a circle and dropped down to prove his point that they, were in fact not leaving and going to settle in for the night.

"Aw come on!" he cried rubbing the back of his head where it had absorbed the most impact and moved to stand up.

Once on his feet he tried to shove the dragon in an attempt to get him to move once more but ended up being the recipient of a slash from the long black snake of a tail and landing straight back down on his back in a very similar position to the one from his landing. Finally succumbing to the notion that Toothless was not to be moved on this one, Hiccup muttered to himself.

"Good for nothing dragon, you'd think they'd be able to do one thing you ask them to but nooooâ€¦ nooo it's all about what they want to do. Listen to me Hiccup, listen to me or I'll slap you with my tail."

He let out a huff of frustration and moved to make the most comfort of what you could on a rock in the middle of the ocean. As he began to drift off to sleep he felt two large wings enclose around him forming a makeshift sort of blanket and after a while he finally fell into what may have been the best sleep he'd had in a very long time.

\* \* \*

><p>The waking up bit was however not nearly as pleasant. The sunlight streamed down in gigantic rays through the clouds right onto Hiccups face, unbearably cheerful for such an early hour. He rolled over and over again in an attempt to block said light, but it refused to be ignored and eventually had Hiccup rising back up in defeat after his attempts to regain sleep. When he had eventually come completely too and once again remember that he was in fact, on a rock in the middle of the ocean, did he notice that Toothless was missing.<p>

He looked all around for him, underneath the rock, called his name, and almost jumped into the sea looking for him, trying and just hoping for him to appear somewhere, anywhere. Unfortunately though he was nowhere to be found, leaving Hiccup in a worried, exasperated and very hot heap in the middle of the rock. He had no way out and the only thing that Hiccup could try and do was get the bearings for his location. For what seemed like hours did he sit and look around at the seemingly endless sea awaiting his dragon while drawing with his finger in the dust. The heat seemed to beat straight down, forcing him to shed most of his furs and leather leaving just his plain green shirt and simple brown pants.

And then, he waited, and waited and waited until the night fell once again and a storm brewing in the sky unleashed its fury. As the wind began to pick up, and from what Hiccup could tell at about 3 o'clock in the morning, the waves began to worsen and with each crash they grew in size and strength. Eventually the only thing Hiccup had left to keep were the clothes on his back, even the fake metal leg he had made had been carried away by the storm. Hiccup clung to the rock with his fingers, silently counting the minutes as they passed by.

So when the morning came and the clouds began to part to reveal yet another cheerful day, the happiness of which began to grate on Hiccups nerves, did he eventually begin to lose hope that he might never find his way back. Maybe Toothless had flown off to catch breakfast and been shot down, or maybe he'd lost his way and plundered at sea out of exhaustion. It were these thoughts that kept him occupied, the positive ones too annoyingly cheerful for someone in his situation to help at all. And it was in these thoughts that he was so consumed that he did not notice the three large vessels begin to approach from the horizon. The ships continued forward until Hiccups ears were filled with the rhythmic syncopation of oars hitting the water and cheers being bellowed. He pulled himself onto his one leg, balancing on his right foot and yelled with all his might, jumping ever so slightly and then halting for fear he might lose his only footing.

From the boats it was rather hard to hear anything at all, yet alone the squeals of a young and skinny boy. But as they approached the rocks it was Lord Dingwall that spotted the Viking.

"Wha is tha?" he bellowed mostly to him but also for the benefit of his clan members too.

"Looks like another wee lamb's been left o here again." Called Lord MacIntosh from the boat beside the original spotter.

"Why would they leave a lamb on a rock?"

"I seen it happen before wit me own eyes!"

"Nae, it's too tall to be a lamb, and look a it, it's jumpin!" interrupted Lord MacGuffin on the third boat refusing to be excluded from the conversation going on.

"Aye, he's right! It mus be a gigantic fish." Agreed Lord Dingwall, happy that someone had finally agreed with him on a subject of conversation, be it Lord MacGuffin or not.

"A gigantic fish? Now tha's just crazy talkin right there, tha's wha it is." Said Lord MacIntosh while simultaneously giving the signal to speed up the pace, causing a chain reaction of racing boats as each tried to prove their clan the best.

"And a wee lamb in tha middle of tha grea wide sea is nae?"

And on like this did the conversation continue as they sailed closer to the approaching rock, each giving their changing observations of what the "wee scrawny thing" could possibly be until they pulled up beside said rock, two boats on the right, two boats on the left.

"Who goes ther?" cried all three Lords at varying times, making it impossible to distinguish in between them. Hiccup tried to maneuver himself to a position where he could address all three boats at one time, but finding such a position impossible continued on anyway.

"Uhâ€¦ The names Hiccup, and I could probably use some help right about now, if you know, you don't mind."

He sputtered, his throat cracked and dry. Rubbing the hair on the back of his head, he waited for their reactions. These were Scottish people, judging by the tartans and his people weren't exactly on fantastic terms with them. So when they each gave a shout of approval and began to barter him with questions about which boat he should ride, he was completely shocked. Couldn't they tell just by the way he looked, the brawn, the fur, the studs, even the metal leg?

Hiccup continued to be dazed at their lack of recognition as he boarded the Dingwall boat (since he was the one to spot him first shouldn't he be the one to account for him?) that was until he looked down at himself and realized that all of the telltale pieces of Viking had been washed away in the ocean and he looked like a genuine country lad, plain and simple. Plus he was much too skinny to look anymore Viking than a bunny.

"So how did you end up ou there on tha rock?" asked the Lord, turning down from his post at the front of the boat once they had set sail.

The men moved as one, rowing the boat forward and changing speeds as commanded by their leader. Every so often would the Lord yell for them to keep pace with the other boats, lurching them in front of the other boats ever so slightly, sending all three into frenzy again. Hiccup sat on a bench in the back, hoping just to be overlooked as a

simple minded boy as he watched the muscles in the back of the man in front of him flex, he answered after a moment of grasping for a viable statement.

"Umm well, you know, boat, rock. It wasn't very pretty."

He stumbled, ending the statement with his face screwed up and his eyes closed, realizing as it came out just how unconvincing it sounded. The Lord moved back down from his position at the front and came over to where he was sitting. It was there he stood and gazed down upon Hiccup with wide eyes and an unreadable expression that passed across his face. The shouts of the oarsmen died down for a minute as they waited for their chief to make a decision, would he be welcome, or would it be back to the sea with him.

Then after the unbearable and rather uncomfortable silence did Lord Dingwall's face break into a hearty grin and he grabbed Hiccups hand, shaking it firmly. After being thoroughly introduced and with his hand still aching did the Lord respond in words,

"Well, it's good ta hav ya Hiccup! I myself am Lord Dingwall, the chief of the grea clan. Those two ninnies in the other boats are Lord MacIntosh with tha flowin mane and Lord MacGuffin, the rather large bear o a man."

Hiccup nodded furiously to acknowledge that he understood, still thanking the gods that he had been welcomed so easily.

"We are headed to DunBroch, to present our first born lads to the princess and to compete for er hand in marriage. I'm sure you'd like to meet my lucky fellow who will in fact be the one to win!" he said, pride inching across his face at the thought of showing off his own blood.

As he yelled at two oarsmen to accompany him to go get the legend of a son from down below Hiccup thought about the princess he spoke of. It must be terrible to be forced to marry someone who only wants to because their dad put them in a competition to win it. Berk might be bad at times, and he might not want to be chief but it measured nothing in comparison to being forced to marry someone for eternity, someone that you didn't love. He pondered on this for a minute, while gazing out into the racing sea that passed below them and at the water flashing by, holding all sorts of various fish that Toothless would have loved.

The thought of love brought an image of Astrid to his mind, which in turn dissolved all feelings and turned bitterness towards the woman he'd never met. Love, he thought was just another way for someone to hurt you. Maybe it was better to have some benefits from marriage to a person you don't know than love them and lose everything. In fact, he thought maybe it's better just to not love at all. But then he remembered his dragon and how their bond had changed everything he'd ever known and how much better things had gotten since he'd taken him into his family. Hiccup clenched his fists into balls and dropped them heavy into his lap with a sigh.

He didn't know where he stood on love really; all he knew was not to get tangled up in it because it could get real ugly, real fast. As he continued to watch the horizon for any signs of upcoming land, his thoughts wandered to his dragon and where he might be. Maybe he'd

flown back home to Berk by now and alerted the others, or maybe he was still out looking for him. Or maybeâ€¦ No he thought, that wouldn't happen not to Toothless.

It had been quite some time now since the chief had last left to get his son, and Hiccup began to wonder where they were until they finally emerged, hair as spikily blond as ever. The son was rather squat with eyes that seemed to glaze over and stare at nothingness. He was short, and awkwardly so for the length of his arms and legs didn't seem to match the way his torso was built and Hiccup couldn't help but just stare. In some ways, even though he'd spent the last few minutes going back and forth on whether true love was good or not, he certainly did feel bad if the princess was forced to marry, well him, just based looks, if he could even lift anything to win a competition.

"I present ta yew Hiccup, the grea and legendary, Wee Dingwall, who felled an entire army with the stroke of one sword!" Lord Dingwall yelled, almost as if he said it loud enough, than it might actually become true. Hiccup cleared his throat and moved to stand, only to realize all too quickly he was missing his left leg forcing him to lower back down slowly.

"Hi, uh Wee Dingwall."

The boy around the same age as Hiccup gave a slight wave, with the same expression never leaving his face, his eyes not truly seeing and his mouth slightly ajar. If it was so easy to down an entire army that this guy could do it, than the people here must not be as tuff as they make themselves out to be, or he's got some mad battle skills he doesn't show, Hiccup thought to himself as he sat with them staring down upon him, an awkward silence spreading in between the three.

"Well, I hope you youngins get along!"

Lord Dingwall made a move to leave only to stop short in his tracks to turn back around.

"Oh, and if you don't mind me askin Hiccup, I'd like to know wha clan yer from?"

Hiccup sat for a minute, unsure how to answer the question. Back on Berk, there was only one clan and he was pretty sure they wouldn't be welcome to accompany the Scots on their journey to marry a princess.

"I'm fromâ€¦ Clan Night Fury."

"Clan Night Fury?"

"Uh, yes?"

"Tha's a strange name. I don't think I've heard of tha one yet."

"Well, you know we're still kinda of a small group and are a very humble sort of people, who don't really like to talk aboutâ€¦"

"Who's yar leader?"

"Ummâ€¦ The Great Toothless."

"His name is Toothless?" The Lord couldn't help himself, but was over come in a series of hysterical fits. Hiccup waited until he had finished before continuing.

"My name's Hiccup."

"Aye it is."

"Well why is Toothless so funny then?"

"Because," he said gesturing to Hiccup as a whole, "yer so funny lookin that it's natural for ye to be called somethin like Hiccup, but for a leader of an entire clan to be called Toothless, well it just tickles me right!"

"Oh thanks."

"It's not an insult Hiccup, it's jus funny!"

"Yeah, because being called a Hiccup and having your clan leaders name made fun of is hilarious." Hiccup tried to deadpan but only found himself cracking up at his undeniably funny story.

"Well I best be on my way Hiccup, we're gettin closer to shore an I have to help navigate through the waters. I'll leave Wee Dingwall here with yew to help keep company."

The smaller of the two Dingwalls didn't move at first, but finally came over to sit next to Hiccup as the larger moved back to his original position a moment later. As they sat, no words passed in between them for what felt to be like quite a long while, until finally the other spoke.

"Hi."

His face never changed as he said it and continued to stare out into nothingness. Hiccup almost flinched as the words passed across them, because it obligated that he get involved in a long, drawn out and awkward conversation. It had happened to him enough times that he could tell from the signs.

"Hi." The silence was almost unbearable now that they'd started something, so Hiccup couldn't help but continue. "What do I call you?"

"You can call me Wee Dingwall. That's my name."

"Yes, I understand that, but isn't it a lot to say at one time?"

"Yup."

"Okay, well um, that's a pretty bird over there I guess."

"You can call me Wee if you wan't."

"As in, pee?"

"Yup."

"Doesn't that bug you that your name sounds like pee?"

"Yup."

"Okay. Um, this boat's got some nice woodwork."

"Yup."

"Is that all you say?"

"Yup."

And so did their conversation continue, with Hiccup asking questions and Wee answering with yup. It was like this that they continued for hours, neither one noticing the approaching landfall or the gigantic castle beginning to loom over the horizon, until each leader gave a shout of success on their journey. They raced towards the docks and when Hiccup did finally take a long look at the castle, it was the most magnificent thing he had ever seen. The stone climbed into the sky for what seemed like forever, and with the sun shining high in the sky, the water glistened from down below like diamonds shining back up. He took in a small breath as they approached, the people pooling into the streets trying to catch a glimpse of the ships. From up higher he could see the king and queen heading down, the king bigger than anyone else with flaming red hair that seemed to fly out in every direction under his metal helmet with one wooden peg leg quite like himself, and the queen with her long green robes and majestic braids that came down from her head in a rope.

Everyone seemed to clear and make a path for their two rulers as they proceeded down the docks. When they finally reached them, Hiccup found himself holding his breath, awaiting for what they were going to say, and if by some chance they were going to see him and recognize him for what he was. It was after a long moment and the queen deciding they had held them all in suspense for long enough did she finally say,

"Welcome to DunBroch clans, Lords and there sons! I hope you will find everything to your liking. You will all be accommodated in the castle with your clansmen, and at 2 o'clock this afternoon we will be holding a ceremony in the great hall to introduce our daughter Merida to your sons and officially start the games! I hope you are all as excited as I am. Now if you would please follow me and I will show you to your rooms."

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*Hi guys! Thank you for being sooo patient with me, I know I only said it was going to be a few days but I've had some technical difficulties lately, sorry about that. So please enjoy and thank you for all the reviews, I read each one (keep it up!) :D. I'll try and get the next chapter up as soon as possible,\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Toothless woke up in a dark cave, alone, afraid and rather wet. Instantly he panicked, trying to fly, only to find the ceiling just inches above his head. Slowly he tried to creep up, not sure what was happening, only looking for Hiccup. Where could he be? Where was he? The dragon's eyes narrowed into slits as he changed over from friend to foe. Whoever had done this meant nothing but harm and he needed to find a way out and back to Hiccup. What had they done?<p>

As he slowly belly crawled in random directions. He growled, low and threatening almost warning the walls of the cave that if they touched him, they would most certainly burn a fiery death. With the thoughts of flames in mind, Toothless lit a small fire on the floor and pawed at it, making the flames grow. As he looked around his new and unfamiliar surroundings, his thoughts settled on Hiccup. What if he was alone and starving? What if he washed away to sea on the rock he left him at?

Worries continued to shoot through his mind on the whereabouts and welfare of his master until his ears pricked up and caught onto the sound of hollow voices bouncing off the cave walls. Whoever they were, they sounded as if they were hundreds of years old, their voice scraggly. Then after a minute another voice could be detected joining the other except this ones sounding as beautiful as a melody of a song yet with a hint of ice one couldn't deny.

"The night fury as you requested." Said the older voice. Try as he might, Toothless could not determine the direction at which the voices came from because of the reverberating walls.

"Where is he?" The voice sent chills down Toothless's spine. He strained to try and figure a way out, but had to settle for just listening in on the conversation.

"In the cellar." It croaked.

"And how long till he'll be ready?"

"Well, it's very complicatedâ€|"

"How long?" This time the beautifulness of its voice vanishing while being replaced by a truly horrifying monstrosity, the sound of which could not be described in words.

"A week."

"A week?" It screeched in the same terrifying voice.

"It has to culminate for a weeks time."

"Fine, very well but we'll have to do something in the meantime. We might consider trying to advance towards the inner circle right here, in our own land."

"Anything you say, your greatness."

"What did I tell you about using titles, we are merelyâ€|"

"Whaâ€|?"

"Shh. It appears our captor is awake now. I will speak to you later, on our plan. For now I suggest you show your manners to your houseguest."

And with that, the fire that Toothless had made went out and everything delved into darkness once more.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup stood packed into the front of the stuffy stone room, leaning on two men from Clan Dingwall as he watched what they called the opening ceremony of the games take forth before him. Merida had made quite the entrance that almost had Hiccup on the floor laughing. Most had missed it, but if you looked closely you could see her take a huge chunk off an apple right as the doors swung open, creating a downright awkward situation for her as she had to discard the apple quickly, pull up and walk through the crowd with hundreds of people staring just at her, in what looked to be one of the most uncomfortable dresses he'd ever seen.<p>

And this, he decided, would be exactly the sort of thing that he would end up doing. Which in turn was why in his opinion it was so fantastically funny. To others though, well there could have been better things that could happen, especially for the Queen. Once she had made it through the strangling air on her way up to the throne, she plopped herself down in the chair with a smug expression on, and pulled down a piece of her red fiery hair, the same shade as her dad's, out of her silk headpiece that connected down to her blue and tight fitting dress that hid what seemed to be her most prized possession of flaming locks.

With the punctuation of Merida's arrival Queen Elinor decided that it would be the opportune time to stand and start with the opening speech and the welcoming of the all clans. The way she began to weave her words kept everyone's competitive levels at bay and held the rapt attention of all the people in the room. That was, except for two. Hiccup had become immune to the kind of thing after many years spent listening to his dad's speeches and knew the exact kind of feeling of when you really just didn't want to listen, which was the emotion splayed across Merida's face at that moment, who was also the other person staring off into space and pointedly not listening to her mother's babble.

He could relate to her in ways of being forced to do something you didn't want to, for it was quite obvious by her demeanor that the last thing she'd like to do was get married to a complete stranger who just happened to be the best at some sport. On that level it was only his sympathies he could extend to her, and his hope that the man who was chosen would be a good match for her personality despite everything. It was at that precise moment that Hiccup did realize he'd been staring at the girl the whole time while the rest of the clan members had held their level gazes towards Queen Elinor when her sapphire blue eyes swept across the crowd only to lock with his green ones for a moment. When she looked at him, her face changed for a flicker of a second especially when she gazed down at his missing leg.

They stayed like this for what seemed like eons, locked in never ending eye contact. But then her mother began to direct her words

straight at Merida, forcing her attention otherwise, leaving Hiccup to keep his eyes cast downwards towards the floor in embarrassment. They began presenting their sons, one by one, firstly the MacIntosh clan, whose representative came with all that could be hoped for in the good looking qualities of a man. He had the hair, the muscle and the confidence that made Hiccup gag, yet didn't seem to be able to tell the difference between a knife or a sword.

The second son was from the MacGuffin clan, who was rather large resembling that of his father, yet spoke in a way that Hiccup couldn't understand for the life of him.

The last son to be presented was Wee Dingwall, whose face seemed to be frozen in the same dull and non-expressing way it had been on the boat and before that. His face was probably like that when he was born, Hiccup thought to himself. As each father told his tale of his own son's questionable mighty feats in battle, he could see Merida visibly flinching with each presentation. He didn't blame her though, he'd be flinching too if it were him up there and the choices were those three. After they'd finished what seemed like an eternity to introduce each individual son and give some form of a background story so it wasn't like she was going to marry a complete stranger Queen Elinor announced,

"Very good young lads! It's nice to see you all here to compete for the hand of my beautiful daughter and join our kingdoms in marriage. Now that we are all acquainted I say it high time for our princess to choose the form of competition these three will have to go through toâ€¦"

"Archery!" Merida screamed, half-jumping out of her seat. After realizing her mistake as everyone stared at her unexpected outburst she smoothed her dress down, and brought herself to her full height. "I pick, archery."

Everyone continued to stare at her after she reinstated her claims, including King Fergus and Queen Elinor. Her eyes raced back and forth not sure what to do, until they found Hiccups, where their gazes held and communicated a silent, I understand, between them in the fleeting moments while everyone waited with baited breath. Then the Queen clapped her hands together, cleared her throat, taking up her speech once again.

"As I was saying, it appears our princess has picked for the sons to compete in an archery competition. I hope you will all find your accommodations to your liking, and I will see to it that dinner is served shortly. We will continue with the games tomorrow afternoon where the winner of this beautiful lady will be crowned!"

The crowd exploded in applause afterwards, all with complete faith that their clan son would be the one to win. Once the energy began to die down though, everyone began to file out of the main hall back towards their predetermined rooms, everyone that was, except for Lord Dingwall and the two men supporting Hiccup up which in turn kept Hiccup there. As Lord Dingwall made his way up to the King and Queen Hiccup was ushered forward as well.

"My King and Queen, I found this young lad on a rock in the middle of the sea on our journey to yer kingdom and well he has nae place to stay and is well missing one of his erâ€¦ bodypartsâ€¦"

Queen Elinor regarded him for a moment before looking at King Fergus. Hiccup caught a glance from Merida, who sat up in curiosity about the new stranger, before King Fergus said,

"Why he's only got one leg Elinor, just like me!"

"Yes dear I noticed." Hiccup grimaced at being labeled just because of his missing body part, but bared through it because fortunately it might work to his credit this time.

"Well we can't jus turn him out! He doesn't even have a fake one on!"

"But dear we've filled almost all of our rooms." This one caught the King in his tracks as he tried to think of a solution, digging deep.

"Wha about the guestroom by the triplets?"

"But that's in our family corridors!"

"It's only by the triplets room."

"But they're so young and we don't know him."

"Dear, I think he has more to worry about than they do if he stays up there."

"He's not family though."

"Any one legged man is family to me!" King Fergus grinned brightly at Hiccup then and Elinor continued to look down upon him in thoughtful thinking. The silence was confusing him though, so to fill it, he decided to the worst thing possible; open his mouth.

"Hahahaâ€¦ ha, haâ€¦. Ha. Yeah that's funny because, you know I've only got one leg andâ€¦ Umm yeah, the names Hiccup and I really just need a place to stay, for a night, I promise I won't be a bother. You won't even notice I'm there. At all. Really. I'll be like a silentâ€¦"

"Where are you from Hiccup?" Queen Elinor asked interrupting, still not quite certain whether or not to let this one legged boy as a guest in her home.

This question though did catch Hiccup off guard, for he didn't know Scotland all that well and knew that they, being the King and Queen of it, would most certainly know if he made up a name.

"Ummm, wellâ€¦"

Silence spread through the room as neither pair of people knew quite what to say. Hiccup struggled for anything that might appease them, and they grew more suspicious with every second he remained silent. Lord Dingwall, just looked furiously back and forth between the three. Merida, having had enough of the discomfort after a whole minute had gone by stood up once more from previously having let her body weight sag on the chair.

"Mum, would ya just let the boy stay? He's obviously exhausted and doesn't need to be bothered by your naggin." She moved to go out the front door, following the retreating people not wanting to be accused of eavesdropping on a conversation, to only stop by Hiccup and his two captors.

The King and Queens eyes followed her all the way, not sure if their protesting would set her off again and ruin their chances of any kind of good terms with the other clans. "Plus, he can't do much damage lookin like that, one leg or not."

"Thank you, thank you for that." Hiccup replied almost instantly.

Merida gave him a smile that sent his whole body into overload and a laugh that sent his stomach tumbling. Instantly he looked away, he'd only ever felt that with one other girl before and that didn't end so well. But she, she was much worse. Falling for her would be like falling for the tip of an arrow. Beautiful, free and wild, yes, but it came with more prices than you could get away unscathed with. She was a princess, and she was already promised to another man, a man that her parents were counting on what seemed to be like quite a great deal which was probably the only reason they were forcing her into said alliance.

Stop it. Stop it Hiccup, he thought to himself, trying to pry his thoughts away from the sound of her free laugh that rather refused to be ignored and focus on the King and Queens faces as their faces twisted in almost regret at what they were about to do.

"Alright, alright." Queen Elinor said, bringing a finger to her temples to try and prevent an oncoming headache. "But you Merida, seeing as you want him here so much, will see him to his room and make sure he is taken care of."

"But mum!"

"Enough Merida, it is only a short trip up the stairs and I'm sure you'd like to take this chance to practice welcoming houseguests, especially ones that you were so kind to agree to take.

"Fine." She grumbled, pushing her way past the two men supporting Hiccup. "Can you walk on your own?"

"I can hop."

"No that won't do." She turned back around to face her parents once again. "What do you think you can do Da?" The king, who had previously been staring off into the distance lit back up again at the thought of being useful.

He ran over to a trunk, concealed behind the legs of his throne, a trunk so inconspicuous you would only notice was there if you were looking for it, popped the lid open and merrily dug through whatever its contents were, humming a tune to himself. Queen Elinor just rolled her eyes and smiled at this notion, having seen her husband behave almost like a dog whenever someone needed anything many times before.

"Well, let's see I've got spruce, and pine and this pretty oak one

with bears carved into the side. But they're all too big." He said pulling them out one by one and holding them up to where Hiccups leg would be from his point of view with one closed eye. "Nae this one's too short."

He picked up different pieces of wood over and over again, each one seeming to have some flaw pertaining to Hiccups body build; until Hiccup thought they would never be able to find him a replacement. That was until King Fergus held up a metal contraption, attached to a wooden log, a contraption not unlike the one Hiccup had used previously. "I've got this one tha might fit but it was only meant to be makeshift until the wood for me other leg was carved so it's nae all that sturdy, but it's a leg as requested." He stood from his kneeling position and brought the thing to where Hiccup was standing. "Ye can try it on if ye like."

Hiccup slowly lowered himself to the floor with the help of Merida, who came by his side to grab his arm and prevent him from falling. Once down he accepted the piece of wood and metal, undid the leather straps, rolled up his pant leg and secured it right above his knee. After he finished, he placed both of his palms on the floor and raised himself into a crouching position. From there he straightened to stand up and applied a small amount of his weight onto his newfound leg to test it out. He slipped a little, still not used to the way it was designed, but ultimately held fast in the end, leaving Hiccup perfectly capable of walking, standing and moving around all on his own. "Ah good! It fits perfectly! Now I think you should do well on that." Said King Fergus as he took a long look at his handiwork, satisfaction displayed on his face before moving back to his throne, while Queen Elinor asked,

"Well that's very good, now you can walk by yourself. Have you got anything to wear Hiccup?"

"Um, well I've got this shirt, I mean I think it fits okayâ€|"

"No I mean for the celebration tonight."

"Oh, wellâ€| no."

"Don't worry laddie, we'll find you something suitable." Said King Fergus from his throne. Queen Elinor smiled a little, at seeing Hiccup dance around on his new leg, happy everything had worked out and the fact that he didn't have to sleep on another rock. "Fergus, do you have any extra kilts?" asked Queen Elinor as she glanced in the Kings direction. Hiccup stopped dead in his tracks. A kilt, as in a skirt?

"Uh, well that's okay, I'm sure I could find somethingâ€|"

"Nonsense." Queen Elinor stated simply and factually. "I'm sure we have plenty to spare seeing as the man over here only ever wears the one." She teased brushing her hand playfully against King Fergus's arm, which sent him into a frenzy as he stood right out of his chair and pulled Elinor in for a whopping kiss.

The expression on Hiccup's and Merida's face was the exact same, their tongues sticking out, both making gagging sounds and trying not to look, while at the same time, not being able to take their eyes

away. The King and Queen kissed for what seemed to be an eternity and Hiccup couldn't help but wonder what was so exciting about it that they would stay that way for so long, until Merida finally called out,

"Oh mum! Da! Could you please not do tha while other people are in tha room!" The shout caused the two to break apart, and sent King Fergus on his quest to bring Hiccup a kilt. When he came back he was loaded down with miles of tartan fabric, which he then neatly dropped into Hiccups arms and ended up shoving him in the general direction towards Merida.

Being that he couldn't see over the garment, he ran smack into her, ending up flat on his back on the stone floor, evoking more painful memories of the day before on the rock. As he lay there, a jumble of the brightest red hair he'd ever seen flew over his eyes and brushed straight over all of his face, until a another face could be spotted tangled up in the fire.

"Are you all right?" she asked a small amount of concern etched into her voice.

"Ow." He muttered and moved to sit up, aching from being smacked against the ground so many times in the past few days. "That's gonna hurt in the morning."

"Oh, yew'll be alright."

"Easy for you to say." Hiccup said as Merida crouched down on the floor so she could be at eye level with him. She smiled lightly and extended her hand,

"I'm Merida."

"I know."

"You know?"

"I was here at the speech, ceremony thing."

"The speech ceremony thing?"

"Well, whatever you call it!"

"I thought you might like to here it from the person." She said quietly, like if it were said too loud her very being might break apart. Hiccup paused for a minute, taking this into consideration.

"Fine then, I'm Hiccup."

"Nice ta meet yew Hiccup." The smile on her face grew wider as she said it, and the glint that could be seen in her eyes when facing her mother, turned into a soft sparkle that appeared faintly at the edges of her eyes.

"Am I supposed to shake that?"

"Shake wha?"

"Your hand." Hiccup glanced down towards the thing that was still extended in mid-air, waiting for her response.

"Don't be silly." And with that she grabbed his hand from his side and pulled him up onto his feet. From there she gathered up the kilt that was strewn across the floor and handed it to him. "Watch where yer goin next time."

"Thank you for the pointer."

"Aw come on you lugnut!" She said, moving to usher him towards the stairs, then thinking better of it came around at his side. "I'll race yew to the top!"

"Hey, that's not fair, I've only got one leg and a kilt andâ€¦"

"Oh come on!" she said, breaking out into a free run that headed straight for the flights of steps hidden in the dark corner. Hiccup chased after her, but found it next to impossible to keep pace with the random bolts of speed. Once he had finally reached the top he found her waiting for him once more and wheezed, trying to catch his breath from running so much, so fast.

"Ughâ€¦ not funâ€¦ really not funâ€¦" he said in between breaths as he grabbed the side of the railing for support. Merida leaned against the wall with her arms crossed, looking all the more amused. Once he had finally regained his composure after a few minutes she said with a laugh,

"It wasn't reeaallyy tha bad!"

"Uh I'm sorry, we can't all be super crazy athletic racing princesses who use their hair to strangle the air out of people." Hiccup said doubled over, sucking in deep breaths. This time though, she cracked up and joined him in the same kind of position, letting out loud chortles and laughs that were so contagious that Hiccup couldn't help but make a few noises himself. When she'd finally recovered she stood back up, followed by Hiccup doing the same thing.

"Yer a funny one!" she said wiping a tear from her eye, still with a stupidly large grin across her face, that Hiccup could only copy with his.

"Well, you know, I try." He said with a shrug and rubbed the back of his neck with his hand. Normally at about this time, there would come the awkward moment where neither would know what to say and end up just sort of going off in their different directions, so Hiccup awaited it, all hands on deck, with his defenses ready to uphold any sort of attack they may come upon him.

But it never came, and Hiccup bowed down his head with his eyes closed still awaiting, until Merida finally spoke up.

"Wha are ye doin?"

"Uh, justâ€¦"

"Oh come on you ninny. Let's go." She grabbed his hand and yanked him in a direction down a corridor, that looked almost identical to the one beside it and ran, dragging him behind her at a fast pace, which

Hiccup could barely keep up with, his peg leg scratching and sliding trying to find a footing.

"Peg leg! Peg leg! Peg leg!" he yelled as he just about wiped out on a stone step that had come loose and caught his metal foot.

"Oh, sorry!" she yelled back, this time slowing down to allow Hiccup the leisure of actually seeing where his feet were going, but only ever so slightly.

They ran down corridor after corridor and Hiccup wonder how in the world a person didn't get lost in the massive castle until finally they stopped by two doors, one a flawless deep mahogany, and the other a light brown oak, with scratches that ran all over it, scratches that had collected over the years from hundreds of sword fights.

"This is yer room Hiccup." she pointed to the dark wood on the left, "and tha, is me brothers." Pointing to the door on the right. Using her shoulder to shove Hiccups room open, a quaint stone room with a four-poster wood bed appeared, a carving of a bear in the corner and a large fire roaring in its hearth.

"Pretty nice."

"Aye it is." said Merida while swinging her form up onto the bed without a second thought. She stared into the flames for a minute, a million thoughts flashing before her eyes as she sat, completely frozen in time.

Hiccup watched her for a minute, not sure what the unpredictable girl would do next. He couldn't help it though, the words just sort of sprung out of his mouth before he could stop them and he asked,

"Why don't you just run away?"

"Wha?" Merida turned to face him, her blue eyes focusing back to the world as he said the words. Unsure why he asked it, and not knowing quite how to continue Hiccup stumbled over his next few statements.

"Well, you know, I couldn't help but notice, that you didn't exactly seem like you really really wanted, toâ€¦"

"To marry one of those ninnies downstairs?"

"Exactly." Merida turned back to the fire, curling up her legs to make herself into a small ball as she hugged her knees.

"I've thought abou it before, and I've tried, but where would I go? There's only the forest, and I know tha it does nae seem like it at times but I really do love me family an..." she stopped as her eyes welled up with tears, and her voice began to quake with all the emotions flooding through her, unable to continue without breaking apart altogether.

"I understand." Hiccup shut the door and moved to sit down by the bed on the floor, just ever so slightly closer to the girl than before, as he too turned to look into the fire as well. Then Merida turned her head though to gaze down upon him, curiosity beginning to spark

behind her glistening eyes.

"Have yew ever run away before?"

"I guess I would say that."

"Why?"

"Same reason as you. Well, I mean not on that level, but still the same kind of premises. Parents trying to force me to do something I didn't want to, wouldn't listen to my reasoning so I found a way out and took my chance."

"Didn't you miss them though?"

"Yeah at times." his heart ached at the thought of his mother sitting alone worrying about her only son, somewhere off in the woods nowhere to be found. But he had to clear those thoughts quickly to keep from loosing his stand. "I'm not like you though." He said turning back to face her as she continued to keep her eyes levelly cast on him. "I've only got a one person family." He offered her a small sad smile, which, she returned with a deep frown as she accepted the fact more remorsefully than Hiccup would have expected her to.

"I'm so sorry." She whispered. Hiccup turned away, sensing an uncomfortable feeling beginning to settle at the bottom of his stomach, before he turned back.

"Don't worry about it, I think you've got bigger problems to worry about right now." Merida groaned, and moved to lie down on her back as they both sat there.

"Wha do you think I should do?"

"What are the rules of the competition?"

"The first born of each chief will be presented as a suitor to try and win the princess and compete in a competition of her choosing." She said mocking her mother's word and tone.

"Well, you're the first born of your chief aren't you?" Hiccup glanced down at the floor again as he said it, not sure what her reaction would be. But to his surprise Merida's eyes lit up as she caught onto what he was suggesting, and her face broke into one of the largest grins he had ever seen.

"Yer brilliant Hiccup! Absolutely brilliant!" she jumped right up off the bed and tackled him in a bear hug to match the ferocity of his father's. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" Laughing, she stood again and dusted herself off as Hiccup remained sprawled on the floor. "Now, I've got to go get meself ready then, and yew've got a kilt to put on." Hiccup just watched her from his position amongst the floorboards as she merrily danced and tapped her way back across the room to the door.

As she opened it though, a thought seemed to occur to her so she flung back around, her hair a heap of bouncing curls. "Will yew be there? Tomorrow?" He could hardly see her face from his position but he sensed a kind of slight anticipation in it, the curves of her mouth gently sloping into a small frown. Not being able to help

himself though he said, with one of the stupidest grins across his face,

"Yeah, psht, of course I'll be there. I mean who wouldn't want to miss a bunch of grown men running across a field in kilts?" Merida gave out a final mighty laugh before leaving calling out as she stepped out the door,

"I'll see you there then Hiccup!" After she left, Hiccup just stayed in his position, his head afloat with red curls, tangling his mind in their unbreakable hold until the clock finally struck and he realized what time it was. Mentally kicking himself for thinking about a girl when he should really be trying to figure out where his dragon was and how he was going to get home, he moved over to the table by the hearth where his biggest challenge at the moment sat and he was faced with one question.

How in the world were you supposed to put this thing on?

### 3. Chapter 3

\*\*Hello there my awesome readers! I'd like to thank you again for your patience (with me and my story) and especially for the reviews. So I just wanted to say keep going! :D\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Merida couldn't contain the joy that swept through her. She was free! And thanks to Hiccup, the random stranger that appeared out of nowhere she was no longer doomed to face the unspeakable, unimaginable horror of marriage. Grinning to herself as she made her way back down to her own chambers where she was to meet her mother to get ready for the feast it was all she could do not to imagine the shock that would take over her face when she found out that she had found a loophole and was prepared to use it one hundred percent. It wasn't fair of them to try and force her into this in the first place. So why would she be expected to play fair as well?<p>

The thought consumed her mind and she couldn't help but feel inexpressible gratitude towards Hiccup. It was funny to her that someone she least expected to be of any use at all, would be the one to help her the most and she hoped he would be at there tomorrow, so she could give him a proper thank you. As she made her way along the corridor, her father could be heard bustling around in his room, humming a song about the famous beast he was surely to down one day. Merida laughed to herself, her father's antics crazy at times, but sweet at others and she knew he only wanted the best for his little girl.

Once past her parent's chambers it was only a short walk to her room where her mother would inevitably be sitting with one of the most uncomfortable dresses she could find, but nothing could put a damper on her spirit not right now. Once she made it through these trials, she would be free, free to ride Angus and shoot her bow and arrow and fly through the forest with nothing stopping her for all the time she wanted. With a grin she nudged the door that had been left ajar awaiting her arrival and said hello to her mother with all the enthusiasm she could muster.

"Hello!" The word was spoken more like a shout as Merida realized that she might just be a little too cheerful at the moment for being able to pass without notice.

"Well, hello to you to dear! Seems you've cheered up quite a bit." Her mother eyed her daughter suspiciously as she whirled across the room, throwing off her shoes and gown as she went. "Wha's got yew so up beat? Or have yew finally realized tha those boys down there are in fact, not horrible monsters who'll eat yew if yew touch them?"

Merida puffed a little sigh in annoyance as she moved back over to the chair her mother was perched in with a corset neatly positioned in her lap.

"Muuuuuummmmmâ€¦| "

"Turn around dear."

"I don't see why I have to wear that tonight." Said Merida, trying to conceal the disdain that began to coat over the joy that had been in her voice and tone, only to little success.

"We've been over this before Merida, it's the proper way to dress. Especially when you have company. Particularly this company."

Her mothers fingers darted in and out, threading the string through and lacing her into the small prison that engulfed her rib cage and prevented a stout, unmoving and unforgiving center that gave off the illusion her form was something that it was not.

A long silence stretched in between the two, as neither knew what to say, both fearing that any word might snap the uneasy peace that had formed only slightly between them, both knowing that it was bound not to last. Finally her mother spoke after the gap became almost too insufferable to stand. "So, how has the boy settled in? I hope his accommodations weren't too last minute, but really we didn't have a choiceâ€¦| "

"Mum." Merida said turning around to meet her mother's green eyes with her own. "I think he'll be fine. He seemed happy enough to have a bed to sleep on for peats sake!" Her mother offered her a small knowing smile as she calmly accepted her daughter in that moment, and Merida couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt for what she was going to do and the chaos it was going to cause for old mother.

But if she didn't go through with it, she would be doomed to live a chained life to a man she didn't nor ever would love, forced to live a life away from the people she held most dear. And Merida being Merida, could not, would not let that happen. She loved her family too much. Her little brothers, who manipulative at times were truly dear at heart and her father who could make a rock laugh until it cried and her mother, who may not understand her at times but loved her all the same and only had the best intentions.

These were people she could simply not live without; they were a part of who she was and who she wanted to be. Leaving them behind would be like leaving a piece of herself behind, the part that she loved most. So even if her actions would eventually cause anguish and unnecessary tension and stress upon her parents, she would at least get to choose

how much time she spent with them and that to Merida was well worth the price. She wanted freedom, and it came with a cost that she was willing to pay.

"There." Said her mother, snapping back her attention to the present situation. "You're all done up! I'll just go and get the dressâ€¦" As she said it she faltered for a moment causing her to turn back around and look at her daughter for a little longer, almost saying something and then thinking better of it and continuing to search for the garment.

It had happened before too, right before the opening ceremonies. Her mother had almost said something; almost spoken words to express how she felt as a mother, not as a queen and Merida had been very much ready to listen. But it always seemed to get lost within her, as the proper royal woman took control again and denied all feelings to pass in between them.

Sighing she turned back around and retrieved the forest green dress from its place on the bed and then moved over to where Merida was standing. She opened up the dress and then shoved it over her head, wrestling with the defiant locks as she pulled downwards trying to get the sleeves over her arms and everything else.

"Och! Ow!"

"Just a little bit more, andâ€¦ There!" the queen took a long look at the dress and summed up Merida's appearance in it.

Then she retrieved a hairbrush from the dresser by the bed and began to relentlessly try to untangle the red curls, which rather refused to do so. After what seemed like ages and endless mutterings of pain, did Queen Elinor actually finish and signaled doing so by clapping her hands together and expressing her joy in the beauty she had accomplished in her daughter.

"Well, just look at you! You're all grown up in tha dress." Her eyes watered as she continued to gaze. Merida, anxious to see what she looked like moved over to the floor length mirror that had been placed there for the purpose, where she was greeted by a truly frightening sight.

"Mum!"

"Wha?"

"I look like a Christmas tree!" she exclaimed as her mother moved over to see what she was talking about. The green dress didn't seem to fit right in the places where it should and hung off her body at awkward angles, resembling the firs of a tree.

It didn't help the matter either that her hair was a contrasting bright red.

"Och, nonsense, you're beautiful in tha dress."

"Why can't I jus wear my blue one?"

"The one you ride Angus in? Definitely not."

"But mum!"

"Enough Merida, you'll be wearing the dress and that's final!" Her mother's anger began to seep through into her words and with her last statement Merida couldn't help to control her own. Standing away from her mother she moved around in frustration, no longer even trying to behave as she was supposed to.

"Why won't you jus let me choose wha I want? It's my life yer playin with here, not a little dolly's! I don't want to marry anyone, I'm not ready and yew just don't understand! Yew never understand!"

"Meridaâ€|" The queen put her head in her hand as she stood, obviously frustrated by the battle that continued to be waged between the two of them.

"Why do I have to do what yew want me to do all the time?"

"Because I said so! Because sometimes yew have to do things that actually make a difference Merida! Not riding around on some silly horse shooting arrows into the sky!" Taking a deep breath Queen Elinor straightened her dress and moved to exit the room as her daughter recoiled in her anger. Knowing she had hit a soft spot with the mention of her beloved horse and archery she tried and failed to correct her statements, only adding to the surmounting anger that boiled beneath Merida's surface. "You're a princess Merida. I think it's time you start acting like one."

And with that Queen Elinor stormed out of the room, leaving a little girl searching for her mother. She was lost and she knew it, but there was nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, and being sent off to a foreign kingdom was the last thing that would help. It was high time for Merida to find out who she really was, before she did anything else.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup twisted his kilt around, nervously fidgeting with the odds and ends of the tartan that wrapped around his waste and extended up over his shoulder, leaving him in an extra long restraining jacket.<p>

"And, you're, you're sure this is how it's supposed to go?" The three red haired triplets stood lifted up on the mantle of the fireplace, so they were eye level with the stranger and even though they were small, they were still scarier than anything Hiccup had ever faced before. As he turned to face them again after looking in the mirror discreetly placed in the corner of the room did he see their silent way of communication, all three each giving a single head bob in agreement.

Hiccup moved once again to look in the mirror and gave a face that resembled his appearance. "Is it supposed to look thisâ€| bad?" To answer his question the trio each made a small shake of the noggin to signal their no. "Well what is it then?" The one in the middle, obviously the leader of the pack stepped out a little, careful not to fall off the edge but daring in the least and made a gesture towards Hiccup's entire body. "Thank you, thank you for that." Said Hiccup moving back over towards his bed, mulling over whether he should just

lie in there and pretend to not exist. They wouldn't miss him would they?

He technically wasn't even invited to this party. Looking up again, did Hiccup realize that while he'd been temporarily distracted the boys had slipped down from their perch and gone somewhere. He stood and walked to the center of the room to try and get a better vantage point, when whoosh! Out of the blue a club came swinging out from nowhere and went straight for his wooden leg, knocking him off balance, followed by a dull sword that clunked Hiccup's back in a single motion, finished off with a shield being thrust towards his stomach, leaving him sprawled on the floor for the third time in the last two days.

"Oww!" he yelled in surprise, the sound being followed by vicious snickering. "Does everybody just have a thing for throwing me on the floor?" Footsteps flew past his head as Hiccup remained on the ground as they collected their various weapons and made their way out the door laughing the entire way. Letting out a puff of air as they left Hiccup moved to get up, only to realize that his kilt had come undone in the process of landing. "Great." He said to himself. "First I get beaten up by a bunch of 5 year olds and now my single piece of clothing has in fact, fallen off."

\* \* \*

><p>The great hall was bustling with life as it was transformed from the ceremony room it had once been prior during the day to the merry dining hall, with people singing nonstop through the entire meal and after. Hiccup poked his head out from behind the banister of the stairs and watched the room's activities not unlike the ones held back at his own home, which almost put him at ease. Almost. He looked through the crowd to spot the triplets who had inflicted so much discomfort sitting next to Merida who seemed happy enough, but always a safe distance away from her mother.<p>

The king himself was oblivious to just about everything as he hollered his song of Mordu, the great bear that was to be his one day. Hiccup almost laughed to himself as he was reminded of his father, both chief and king similar in their stubborn quest to right the beasts that'd wronged them. With his small distraction, Hiccup took his chance, held his breath and ran out into the open, down the stairs and over to the table at the end next to Wee Dingwall and the other boys before anyone else could see him. As he sat down, he had to strain to hear over the multiple conversations going on around him. He yelled,

"Hi Wee."

"Hi." Once he had spoken to one, the other two's attention seemed to immediately snap over to Hiccup from their food. The MacIntosh was the first to speak.

"Who are yew?"

"The name's Hiccup."

"Yer made of Yiccups?"

"No my name is Hiccup."

"Wha are yew picking up?"

"No!" Hiccup leaned across the table followed by MacIntosh doing the same thing so they could try and hear each other better. "My name is Hiccup!"

"Yer name is Hiccup?"

"Umâ€¦ Yes?" Sitting back down MacIntosh let out a tremendous laugh that didn't end until Hiccup couldn't take it anymore and spoke out, "Why, why does everyone think that's so funny?" He waited for a moment while all three continued to look at him "Okay so maybe it is kind of funny but still!"

"Kind of funny?" said MacIntosh leaning back in his chair, still laughing while beating his fist against the table. "Tha's hilarious!"

"Thank you, thank you for that."

"Yer welcome!" Still laughing MacIntosh turned to MacGuffin. "Can you believe him?"

"I'm right here."

"It'a jgh seufj oepew aredgf." Hiccup turned towards the largest of three as he continued to mumble his nonsense, leaving him and the others just plainly confused. When he'd finished, he turned towards the boys expectantly waiting for their reply, but none of them knew what to say, nor how to respond, leaving them all sitting there with their mouths hanging open. Finally Hiccup moved to get a plate and then selected two small chicken legs from a platter nearby. He started to eat and after a moment everyone seemed to have recovered from the awkward moment from beforehand.

"Look! He's got two chicken legs to match his own!" MacIntosh, obviously cracking himself up, doubled over in laughter, as Hiccup was just about to take a bite from the meat.

"Hahahaâ€¦ that's soâ€¦ funny." Hiccup put the leg down and moved to get up, finished with his dinner and not really enjoying his Scottish company anymore.

"You know I think I'm gonna goâ€¦" he said, scouring the room for any place that might serve as refuge. The only thing he could find though was the bundle of red hair that kept dancing across the room. He coughed and averted his eyes as it began moving closer and closer, weaving in and out of the crowds on its path, the destination unknown, but obviously close to the boys from the clans. "You know, somewhere."

With that, Hiccup fled not sure where to but just to keep moving. He cleared over a drunken man who had hit the ground in his sluggish tumble, moved through crowds of women holding babies, and managed to avoid just about everyone who tried to ask him a question, be it, where's the bathroom? Or what are you doing here Viking? And he continued like this dodging in between people, never staying in any place long enough to be noticed (he certainly had enough practice) and grabbing bits of food as he could to munch along the way.

One time he passed an enormous cake placed at the back of the room where the dancing was supposed to be held. The thing had little thistles piped all around the base and each clan had a tier, while the king and queen stood at the top, looking down at them all. He couldn't help but stand and stare at it for a while until the pressure of the crowds became too much and he had to move on. The experience, however wasn't that bad in all actuality as the contagious merriment of the gathering began to rub off on Hiccup and he couldn't help but smile a little to himself every once in a while only to immediately remember that his dragon, was stranded somewhere and he really had no way back to Berk, who would most definitely be in a frenzy now that their future chief was gone.

When these thoughts would occur, he would suck in his breath and try to focus on what was happening before him in the now and promise that he would figure something out later, until finally he'd done it enough times for the feelings to actually begin to fade away. As his worries left his mind too, he slowly began to relax and just move along with the crowd. At one point did he go and sit down at a bench off to the side as room was cleared for the dance floor and women and men flew past in a frenzy to find a suitable partner.

Hiccup sighed, wondering what it was like to just be like them. Where the most important thing you had to worry about was whether you liked your dance partner very much. It was at that precise moment though did a hand fall on his shoulder, well if you call clutching the muscle falling, that Hiccup looked up to see Merida, desperation etched in her face.

"Hiccup yew've got ta help me. I mean, I know yew already have and I'm grateful and all but this, this is much more serious."

"What? What's happened?" Hiccup looked around in alarm, not sure what he was going to find but searching all the same.

"My mother," she said, her words drawing out as she said the words, "is forcing meâ€¦ to dance." Merida spoke in an embarrassed whisper her face aglow.

"Oh no."

"My thoughts exactly! I told her no way was I going to do tha! I mean who was I going to dance with?"

"Well?"

"Well then she said with a BOY. And not just any boy, one of those dingbats for the opening ceremony dance." As she spoke she stretched out an arm with a finger extended towards the general area the chief's sons were located at.

"Oooohâ€¦ That's ruff." Hiccup scrunched up his face mention of it, knowing how that would turn out.

"So." she said slowly, but in the same manner all the same.

"So?"

"I told her I'd already agreed to dance with yew."

"You what?" he nearly yelled while simultaneously dropping his third attempt at a chicken leg onto the floor as it was instantly swept away by shuffling feet.

"Well wha else was I supposed to do? It was either yew or Wee Dingwall and I don't really feel like getting drooled on at the moment."

"Thank you for that."

"Oh come on Hiccup! It's not like we're getting married, I'm already supposed to do tha. You're the closest thing I've ever had to a true friend in this place and I don't think friends would make each other go through tha." Merida said while looking towards Wee Dingwall who was currently picking his nose.

"But I don't even know how to do the reelâ€¦ thingys! And I've got a peg leg, andâ€¦"

"Hiccup." She whispered while extending her hand once more.  
"Friends."

He stared at the limb protruding towards him as he contemplated his options. He could, very easily run away at this point, or just flat out refuse to escape the chances of being recognized but what Merida had said kept ringing back through his ears. He was the closest thing she'd ever had to a friend and it was pretty much the same for him too outside of the teenagers he used to train with. There was Astrid of course, but things hadn't gone over so well with her. So he probably did the stupidest thing he could've done in that moment in the name of friendship. He extended out his own hand to meet hers.

"Fine. But," he said while Merida helped to pull him up. "If you loose a toe, I warned you."

"Noted." And with that they dodged their way through the crowd towards the front as Queen Elinor moved from her position at a nearby table to announce the start of the dancing.

"Ahem." Clearing her throat she continued as the attention of everyone turned towards where she was standing. "I would like to pronounce the beginning of the dancing for tonight. And to start, my daughter Merida has selectedâ€¦" her eyes darted to where Hiccup and Merida were both standing by the wall, engrossed in an intense conversation as she gave him the run down of how it was going the steps were going to go. "She has selected a, partner, for this waltz. So if they would be so kind as to come join usâ€¦" As she said it, the attention of the two snapped away from their own conversation, forcing them to move down to where they were being summoned.

The whole crowd swelled with the three lords and their sons gathering right at the front at the ring that they were supposed to waltz through. Hiccups palms sweated as he was not entirely sure what he was doing and felt his wooden leg wobble, just for a split second, but enough to continue to add to his ever growing pile of worries. As the band took up their instruments, Hiccup and Merida moved to center floor where he took her hand in his and placed his hand on a

respectful part of her back while she put hers on his shoulder.

"Now, when tha music starts yer going to step back, an than twirl an than lead me forward an then we'll do a hop than a skip thanâ€¦ No tha's nae right, it's a twirl than a skip than a hopâ€¦"

"Oh great."

"Jus follow me when tha music starts."

"I thought the guy was supposed to lead!"

"Who ever said tha?"

And with that did the notes come circling around them as the fiddles in the corner came to life and Merida started to move, followed by Hiccup. It took him a few moments to catch on first, but it wasn't so bad after they had gotten in rhythm with it. Of course they weren't the best dancers you could've ever seen, at some points he would stumble on his beginning to wobble peg leg or Merida would make the wrong move at the wrong point, but it was a pleasant kind of dancing, one that could be enjoyed at the time while all of your other worries were forgotten. After they had danced for what seemed to only be a short amount of time, the band broke into a merry quick time as the signal for the end of the dance. "Grab my other hand Hiccup."

"Okayâ€¦"

As he said it they joined arms to form an oval in between them and starting at the back of the room they danced around in fast circles as they moved across the room. At one point did Hiccup think he stepped on Lord MacIntosh's toe, but he wasn't entirely sure, but pleased all the same. It wasn't until they had made towards the back of the room near the tremendous cake that Hiccup noticed the three red heads of hair that seemed to follow them through the crowd and it wasn't until he tripped on the wooden sword extended out towards his peg leg did he notice in fact how close the cake was to them.

It wasn't until it fell on him did Hiccup realize just how big the cake actually was.

"Oh no." he said as the thing came crashing down, covering him in a shower of icing. He fell to the floor in a heap where the remains of the beautiful thing lay. Merida stood there with her hand over her mouth while everybody else just stared. And then she let out a giggle. Just a tiny one that you wouldn't be able to hear if you weren't standing right next to her, but a giggle all the same. But then that giggle turned into a roaring laugh and Hiccup couldn't help but do it to as he realized how ridiculous he looked. Then she gave him her hand once more and he rose to his feet, trying to wipe off whatever sludge he could.

"Not tha cake!" King Fergus yelled from his throne, disappointed that his favorite treat had been ruined.

"Merida!" her mother yelled. "Come here. Now. And bring the boy with yew."

"What do we do?" Hiccup half-whispered so only Merida could hear. She turned back to him, defiance lighting up her eyes.

"Weâ€|" she said grabbing his hand and making her way out the exit in the back of the room. "Run!" They wound there way down staircase after staircase as hordes of guards and people chased, them trying to prevent their escape. Once they had made it to the stables though Hiccup was plainly out of breath as Merida went to go grab one of the horses.

"Hiccup?"

"Mmmghhruuunnâ€|"

"I'd like yew ta meet Angus."

#### 4. Chapter 4

**\*\*Hello there, again! I have a new chapter for you guys, although it's just a little bit short. It took me a while to get there dialect just right, so I didn't get to write a super long chapter. But please enjoy and drop a review! They really help inspire me to keep going, so thanks...\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup wasn't that out of shape. I mean really, he had spent years working in the forge and flying on dragons. He had muscle, but not the kind that's overly obvious. He was more lanky, but powerful in his wiry sort of way. But when it came to running though, well that was more of a problem and when Merida would race, flying past nearly everything enjoying the sensation of the air burning through her lungs it was everything he could do to keep up.<p>

They had flown through the forest past the archery targets Merida had made on back the mighty steed she called her own, named Angus. In a way, he was very much the same as Toothless was, extremely protective of Merida. When he had first tried to get on his back, the thing bucked him off and sent him flying into a combination of mud and horse dung, only leaving Merida laughing and muttering things like, "Good ole Angus!" As they stalled though, the mob of angry Scottish folk grew larger and closer and Merida called out to the tank,

"Come on you lump, he's jus comin for one ride! We've got to get away!" After a few moments of intense persuasion though, did she finally convince him to allow Hiccup on his back and after helping him up, they took off heading straight for the one place they could find sanctuary in.

"What are we doing?" he yelled over the wind as he clung to whatever part of the horse he could find.

"We're running away!" she called back, turning around for a brief moment with a smile on her face as they cleared a tree that had fallen straight into their path.

"What?"

"Jus like you said!"

"This is not, exactly what I meant!"

"What did yew mean then?" Hiccup had to strain to hear her over the wind that whistled past his ears.

"Wellâ€¦"

"Stop being such a scardy ca and ride!" The energy that was radiating off her was glowing and he could feel the excitement in which she felt, the same one he felt when flying away from his own problems back in Berk. It was a taste of freedom, what it was like not to have to live by anyone else's rules and you could just go anywhere you wanted. He understood what she was going through and knew the joy you felt inside when you finally did escape. But he also knew the consequences of your actions when you returned, and those were far less pleasant and sometimes he questioned if it was all worth it, running away, upsetting the ones you loved so much.

Sometimes he decided, in his thinking you had to go back and fight. In this moment though, in his escape and hers he also chose that for the sake of Merida, he would enjoy it, just this once and try and not question his every move as the passed lumps and trees until they finally came into a clearing of standing stones, the air eerily quiet. Hiccup knew this place, this was the place he'd seen the orbs, the place that Toothless was so desperate to get away from and he couldn't help but begin to get the same feeling again that he had the day before, the feeling as if the orbs were leading him somewhere.

"What is this place?" he asked, his curiosity peaking for the still stones.

"I don't know, but, butâ€¦ Hiccup do yew think I'm crazy?"

"Well that's a matter of opinionâ€¦"

"But do yew think I'm crazy?"

"Uhhâ€¦ I'd prefer not to answer."

"Hiccup!"

"But, I get what you're saying, like this place has something, something weird with it."

"Like it hasâ€¦"

"Magic." They said at the same time, each one nodding in agreement. Angus whinnied, not trusting the place and as Hiccup and Merida dismounted, felt the same sensation Toothless had two moved to the center of the stones and stood for a moment, while Angus edged closer, the farther he got from his master, the more the walls would press in on him.

"What are the stones for?"

"Do yew always ask so many questions?"

"Hmph." As he said it a ring of red orbs appeared in a circle around

the standing stones, each with a face, each beckoning for both of them to move their way out of the ring.

"Wha?"

"I've, I've seen these before, but they were blue and I couldn't help but go towards them. It was like they were calling me, like they were going to take me somewhere I really needed to go."

"Theseâ€|" she said, surprised overtaking the entirety of her face. "These are the whil of the whisps. But why are they red? Yew said yew've seen them before?"

"Now who's asking questions?"

"Hiccup!"

"Okay, okay." He said, trying not to get distracted. "Maybe they like the color of your hair?"

"Hiccupâ€|"

"I don't know! How am I supposed to know, you're the one who lives here!"

"Don't yew live here too?"

"Wellâ€|"

"Where are yew really from? They said they found you on a rock in tha middle of tha sea near DunBroch, but you're not like anyone I've ever met from there."

"How so?"

"For one thing yew are far more off yer rocker."

"Thank you, thank you for that."

"Thay certainly would never do anything like this."

"You know I'd love to sit and chat about this but can we talk later, when we're not surrounded by a magical rock circle with weird spirit things trying to mysteriously lead us somewhere?"

"Fine." She said eyeing him, as the orbs grew ever closer. "They're supposed to lead yew to yer fate, the whil of the whips. They're spirits of our ancestors, but they're normally blue."

"What happens if you touch them?"

"Thay normally will disappear and lead yew in a trail of more of them to the place thay want to take yew."

"How do you know?"

"Because I saw them once." Her eyes grew cloudy as she said it, diving back into memories when her family was whole and happy, when she was just a little girl. "It was when I was wee and I shot my first arrow."

"I take it you like archery." As he said it, she shot him a glare for interrupting her story, but not being able to let out half a laugh at the statement in itself. "Yes, if yew haven't noticed by now. Back to ma story though if you please."

"Go on."

"Well, I shot my arrow, like I said and ran into tha forest to retrieve it. Except I couldn't find it and I kept looking and looking but the arrow was nowhere to be found. And thenâ€¦" she said looking up. "Then thay came and showed me the way. As it turned out Mordu the bear had been lurking in the very same forest and if it weren't for them than I would have most likely been dinner."

"Oh." He could see the next look that past over her green eyes to match the forest, one of almost hoped mixed with a little fear. "So you're saying they're good."

"Nae."

"But, I thought that's why you told me the story!"

"No, that was my story Hiccup. The whisps have been known to lead men to their deaths too."

"What?"

"They're powerful creatures. It's been said tha when great men look at them, the only thing they can think of is how thay have ta follow it. To sustain tha kind of power to be able to know the fates of peopl, thay need more, so by adding these grea men to their collection than they can keep going on like it, sharing the energy thay can get a."

"That's very comforting." It was at that precise moment too did Hiccup notice that the entire time he had been only looking at Merida, the creatures being blocked out by her voluminous hair.

That's how he'd felt before when he'd been here with Toothless, like that's the only thing that mattered and he'd forgotten everything else. But he wasn't a great man; he'd run away from his village because he was scared. Despite his age and size he was pretty sure that he was still anything but a man let alone a great one. "Well what do we do?" he said, shielding his eyes from the things.

"I don't know, maybe we could walk past them?"

"I'm not so sure that will work."

"Here let's see." She picked up a rock from the grown and threw it as far as she could, aiming in between the things. Just as it passed them, they all exploded into plumes of fire, incinerating the stone as the fires flew everywhere, while singing the ends of Hiccup and Merida's hair.

"Well tha's new."

"Maybe we should try something else."

"Wha can we do though, there's no way out!" She turned around and began to circle around the stones to try and find some secret exit, some place where they could go to escape. When she turned back around though, she saw Hiccup slowly making his progress right towards the deadly balls of light. "Hiccup!" She called. "Wha are yew doin?"

She waited for a response, only to hear silence as he ignored her and continued to go straight for the things that, moments before were nothing but exploding fire. Something was wrong and she could tell, so she sprinted straight to him and tried to push him back, surprised to find that underneath the clothing that there really was some muscle. "Hiccup!" she yelled. "Hiccup stop!" But he just continued to move, his eyes never leaving the things once.

Merida was doubled over, trying to push him backwards until they finally reached the edge of the circle and she was forced to stand up straight again or be burned. As she did this though, Hiccup snapped back to attention, looking confused as to where he was and why he was so close to his death.

"Aggh!" he yelled through the silence, stumbling backwards. "What were you doing?"

"Wha were you doing? You just keptâ€¦" It dawned on her what was really happened as she spoke her thoughts aloud. "It's yew tha they want!" she said smiling, content with herself for finally solving the mystery. "Tha's why they're here. Because thay want yew! You're a great man! When I looked at them, I was fine but when it was yew, yew couldn't stop going towards them."

"But I'm not a great anything, I'm justâ€¦ just Hiccup."

"Thay know us better than we know ourselves Hiccup. Thay want yew for some reason. Yer not particularly muscularâ€¦"

"Hey!"

"I'm just stating the obvious."

"That makes me feel better."

"Yew are strong, but not overly so. Yer not very fastâ€¦"

"Wellâ€¦"

"Yew can't ride a horseâ€¦"

"That was my first time!"

"Yer not very good a any sport from wha I've seen."

"Now you're just being mean."

"I think they want yew because yer clever Hiccup. You know how to think."

"Hmm."

"So if they want yew because yer clever, than yew must be able to think of a way out of here!"

"It's not that easy!"

"Sure it is!" she said grabbing Hiccup's face with both hands and lowering him down to meet here eyes. "Just think."

"Butâ€|"

"Hiccup. Think."

So he closed his eyes as he felt Merida's ruff calloused thumbs on the side of his cheeks. They were surrounded by angry whisps who exploded in fire if you touched them. They couldn't get out, but the things couldn't come into the circle for some reason. Angus was circling around the place snorting and whining, wanting to go but not wanting to leave his friend.

Merida said they wanted to lead him to his death so they could turn him into one of them. He opened his eyes again to a bang and to find Merida staring back at him. He chanced a look at the things to find them beginning to throw themselves forward and hit what was an invisible force field created by the stones, but quickly snapped his attention back to Merida to avoid a repeat of what happened a few moments ago.

"I can't get anythingâ€|"

"Hiccup, look at me." She said as Hiccup looked at everything, the ground, the rocks, the sky, the trees, anything but her piercing eyes. "I believe that yew can do it. I know yew can." He watched her for a moment, as her face didn't change in its stony expression.

"If you know so much why can't you do it?"

"Because." She said slowly, emphasizing each word. "They want yew, because yew're the only one who would know how to get out." He thought about her words for a moment and her realized that those words were all he needed, to think. The assurance that for once, someone he knew and trusted believed that he could do something; sure that he could make the right decision.

People always told him that he was going to be a great chief and he had the leadership skills. But no one had ever told him that they truly believed in him and that they knew with one hundred percent certainty he would know what to do. It scared him a little, but at the same time, drove him to find the best answer. An idea, a crazy idea popped into his head and fueled his thoughts.

"Well?" He looked around once more before answering.

"Iâ€| I think I know what to do." Merida's face broke into a large grin as he said it, happy that they would be able to get out. "But it's a crazy."

"Good."

"Absolutely insane."

"Perfect."

"Like jump off and blow up your rocker kind of crazy."

"Sounds grea."

"Okay." He said tearing off a strip of fabric from his shirt. "First things first."

"Wha do we do?"

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid sat overlooking a jagged cliff that when she looked down dropped at least 100 feet at jagged sharp angles to an ever-waiting sea. She sighed knowing that if she didn't go back to the inn now, they most likely send a search party out to look for her, but she just couldn't tear her eyes away from the sea, the moody and beautiful, briny water that hypnotized her, planting her feet into the ground.<p>

The sound of crashing waves lulled her into an almost sleep and she let her thoughts wander, about everything she'd done, about whether or not Hiccup could ever forgive her for what she'd done.

I mean she'd be pretty mad if someone had done that to her, kept such a secret that could've kept him from so much loss.

"Astrid! I found her guys! Heyâ€|" he cleared his throat moving closer as he did so, "Astrid, you know everybody's been looking for youâ€|"

"Touch me Eret and it'll be the last thing you do." She snapped trying to make it clear for her want of being one hundred percent alone. Apparently though, she didn't make it clear enough since the next thing he did was plop himself down right next to her and continue to talk, disrupting the pleasantness of the absolute silence.

"Fine, fine, fine, I got it. Hey, don't look at me like that! I'm not actually touching you like you asked! I mean most people don't like to sit on cliffs by themselves, so I figuredâ€|"

"Well you figured wrong, unlike most people, I actually like some time to myself, so if you pleaseâ€|"

"You know, I think you're actually a real softy at heart but you wear this, like whole tuff girl armour to keep anybody from ever really seeingâ€|"

"Tuff girl armour?" she laughed, but it was a short and to the point as someone who was very desperate to get away from something would, but it loosened her up all the same. "Now you're just being stupid Eret."

He laughed, rubbing the back of his neck at the same time. "I'm told I do that a lot."

"Wellâ€|"

"No that's enough from you!" he said while clamping a hand over her mouth.

"Mmmgmdhhhâ€|" she yelled into his hand while trying to pry the thing off at the same time. Once she had finally done so, she scrubbed her tongue with the nearest plant, trying to get the taste of dirt, sweat and dragon dung out of her mouth. "Ugh! When was the last time you washed that thing?"

"Ummâ€|"

"Ugh! That's disgusting, I swear to the gods, I thought I told you not to touch me!"

"Wellâ€|" Astrid hmpf and turned her body, trying to express with her body posture her desire for him to leave, again and go back to whatever he was doing before.

"You know," he said quietly almost like he didn't want her to hear, like he was having his own private conversation. "The people aren't bad. They saved me from Draco and after all things." He took a deep breath before finishing, "I think this is the first time I've actually been happy." When he'd finished, he took a glance towards her and Astrid was wondering what he wanted her to say, because out of all people she would probably be the last someone would tell her something like that.

"Eret."

"Yeeesss?"

"What are you doing here?" It was a moment before he finally answered, sounding like he'd been caught in the act, about to steal the prize jewel only to have the police come in the second he was about to get out the door.

"That easy to see through huh?"

"Not as much you, just the fact that I'm not exactly the first person people come to for emotional problems. Now why did you really come? I highly doubt it was to look for me."

"I was actually trying to hide from Ruffnut."

"Oh." She answered, feeling bad for her friend but at the same time really not. Ruffnut could be a little obsessive and downright creepy at times. "I understand that."

"And then I saw you sitting here and was like, she'd never disturb Astrid, so I'll justâ€|"

"But you do realize she will find you eventually though." He groaned, knowing she was probably right.

"Hey, did you hear?"

"What?"

"They can't find Hiccup, he's missing."

"He always does that, I'm sure he'll be back by sundown."

"He's been gone since yesterday."

"Hmmm." They lapsed into silence after this, neither of them quite knowing what to say, Astrid not really wanting to say anything at all. Her thoughts were more preoccupied with Hiccup.

I mean, he'd always left and gone on little adventures by himself when he felt too pressured. But last time though, last time it had resulted in something far worse. "Do you think he's okay?"

"He's Hiccup, nothing could kill him."

"Trust me, lots of things could kill him."

"Okay so maybe you're right, but still. Why did you two break things off again?" she glared at him, this time the message getting through that she did not want to talk about it.

"Fine, fine, fine, I won't ask, it's okayâ€¦ Hey where are you going?"

She moved to get off, dusting off her leather skirt, while picking up her mother battle-axe from a discrete place by a tree.

"Places."

"I'm coming with you to this place then."

"No you're not, stop being stupid Eret." She turned around while she said it and tried to stop him from following her, even though he was about a foot taller.

"Then tell me where you're going then."

"I don't have to tell you anything."

"Then I'm coming with you, unless you tell me."

"Fine then."

"Well?" she turned back around and started making her way towards the village.

"To see Valka."

"I'm still coming with you." This time, she let the hilt of her battle axe fly backwards and land into the gut of the man, resulting in a nasty sounding squelch and a small high pitch scream. "What was that for?"

"I thought we had a deal?" She could hear him wheezing behind her.

"You're not going to leave me for Ruffnut to find are you?"

"Yes."

"You can't stop me!"

"You know what, fine! You can come with me but you have to be absolutely silent. Do you understand?"

"Yep."

"Good." This time, she moved along at a brisk pace, her strides wide as she moved in and out along the roads that lead to the chief's house.

## 5. Chapter 5

**\*\*Hi guys! It's been a long time since I last updated, and I'm sorry! School started in August and I've been super crazy busy. As a year long English project we've actually been writing our own books that will be published and available for purchase so I've been working super hard on that. Anyways, sorry the chapter's so short too, this is the only free time I've had in ages but I'm gonna try to fit in more somehow... Enjoy!\*\***

Hiccup clenched his teeth together as he continued to tear a long strip from his shirt; painstakingly trying to make sure the rip was even. Outside of the circle Angus continued to neigh in exasperation while the orbs kept throwing themselves at the invisible force field the stones created. All the while the people in the middle were being kept very busy.

"Hiccup?"

"Mmmmpfhffrrgâ€|"

"Hiccup?"

"Yeah?" he said while finishing off the last bit at the bottom of the garment.

"Wha are we goin to do?"

"Can those things hear?"

"Wha?"

"Can those things hear?"

"I don't know." Merida leaned down more towards where Hiccup had sprawled out on the ground trying to get a better angle to continue to pull at the fabric.

"Well, I probably shouldn't say my plan out loud, I mean what if they can hear? We don't even know what they are let alone if they have ears at all, or maybe they just have little holes orâ€|"

"Hiccup! Just, finish wha yer doin then."

"Fine, fine. There." He cleared his throat and stood back up with a triumphant look splayed across his face and a long simple green

rectangle hanging from his left hand. Merida spent a moment looking back and forth between his hand and his head before asking, "Wha is tha?"

"I told you were the one who always asks so many questions."

"Hiccup!"

"Okay, okay. So, you know, you said that if I so much as even look at them they'll pull me in with their magic spell kind ofâ€¦ stuff right?"

"Yeah, I guess soâ€¦"

"Well! If I can't see them, they can't do anything right?" His eyes sparkled with anticipation; feeling ever so proud of his unparalleled genius. Merida however just kept on looking.

"I'm not quite sure that's exactly how that works." She tried to look cheerful, but you could tell by the way she said it, it was less than funny to her.

"Well I mean, what else are we supposed to do?"

Merida didn't answer for a while as Hiccup continued to make sure his eyes never strayed past her wave of fire hair. After what seemed like eternity of a silent eye battle did she speak, "I don't think I can let you do that Hiccup. I know I said all that stuff, but wha if it doesn't work? Wha then, you couldn't just let them take you, I've barely even gotten tew know yea." She hid her face once she said it almost ashamed of the fact that the reason she didn't want him to die was such a selfish one.

"Meridaâ€¦" Hiccup stuttered really unsure what to do in a moment like this and on the whole very uncomfortable.

"No, no it's fine, tha was a silly question, it's okay if you die."

"Ummmâ€¦"

"I mean, it's not okay if you die, but I'll be okay if you die."

"Okayâ€¦"

"Alright, just to settle things, it'll be bad if you die, but I Merida will be okay if you die even though-"

"Merida?"

"Yea?"

"I'm pretty sure I'm the one who's supposed to do the stuttering."

"You're right! What's gotten into me? It must be the orbs and their magical powers, I think I'm just gonna go stand over there and watch while you do thisâ€¦" she said moving to stand up before Hiccup

snatched her wrist, desperately trying not to avert his gaze to see how their shield was holding up.

"Merida it's okay. Yea, yea I know, please don't hit me! I wouldn't want you to die either."

"Wha?"

"Just know that if our places were reversed I wouldn't want you to die either."

"Alrighâ€|"

"So, it's okay if you don't want me to die too."

"But I already said Iâ€|"

"I know, what you said."

She smiled as he said this, as Hiccup was crouched down in a most awkward position with an expression of pain and general happiness stretched across his face.

"Well, then Hiccup," she spoke, drawing out his name, "I do nae want you to die either."

"Cool then." Rubbing the back of his neck, he began to pull on the blindfold. "Let's do this."

"Yer crazy."

"So I've been told." With that did he stand up, slip, fall down and then stand again to move more towards the sound of the orbs smacking. "If you could just tell me which way to go though."

"Oh, um three steps to the left then. No, no NO! Not tha left, my left."

Before he could stop though he smacked into a stone, hard and ended up on his back once again, head ringing from the impact.

"Why?" Getting up slowly did he take a moment before standing. "I'm gonna be dead before I even get to the orbs if we keep going like this."

"Well yer the one whose nae following direction."

"What? I can't even, I don'tâ€| Fine, where to next and do it from my stand point please?"

"One foot in front of the other, tha's it, just keep going you're about to reach them andâ€|"

Once he'd stepped near to the edge to the orbs turn blue again, maintaining their blue form, as Hiccup steppe precariously near the edge, almost unsure what he was going to do.

"Deep breaths Hiccup, deep breaths," he mumbled to himself before he could change his mind about this whole thing and placed his foot outside the ring, followed by the rest of his body. In a flash,

purple light erupted from everywhere all at once, enveloping Hiccup before he even knew what was happening. Merida dove to take cover behind one of the tall standing stones, calling out to Hiccup, while Angus whinnied in despair, none of them knowing what to do. And just as quickly as it had started the light ceased, the orbs were gone and all that was left was Hiccup crumpled up in a heap, the top of his spiky hair slightly singed. "Hiccup!" Merida called, once she'd realized it was all over, dashing out to where he lay unmoving. "Hiccup are yew all righ?" Once she reached him he groaned, still refusing to open his eyes.

"Why did I do that again?" his voice cracked and dry from the experience rang out as he began to shuffle to sit up.

"Don't ask me, yer the one who came up with the idea."

He laughed at this, partly because it was his own stupidity and partly because of the way she said it.

"At least it worked."

"Tha it did," she smiled before continuing, "Wha now?"

"Hey, I figured out how to get us out of there, it's your turn now."

"Alrigh, alrigh, we could go down to a cove down by the glen. It's nae tha far and the ocean air should warm us right up."

"Yea, sure, let's do that."

"Well ge up than you lazy arse."

"Hey! I just walked through a wall of magical creatures."

"Tha's no excuse."

"What is with you Scottish people?"

"Resting's wha been dead's for, now get a move on, I'll get Angus."

"Fine, fine, fineâ€¦"

As she left, Hiccup felt a burning sensation on his forearm, the pain causing black spots to appear in front of his eyes. Trying to mask the pain and keep from shouting he moved back the sleeve of his shirt to reveal a mark in the shape of a circle that had been scarred into the flesh above his elbow. "What theâ€¦" Before he could finish though, did Merida call him from the other side of the circle and he quickly pulled the fabric back over his arm to cover the mark. Whatever it was, it was pretty impossible in Hiccups mind for it to be anything but good and he was one hundred percent right. And for that reason alone was why he simply couldn't tell Merida.

End  
file.